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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (8/01): Strong support for  
Palestinian national dialogue

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Main Stories:  
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The lead story in all the dailies is the visit of Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas to Tunisia on July 31. Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida run a banner headline in red, proclaiming that Abbas has ordered [all factions] to release all prisoners arrested following the Gaza explosion on July 25. Al Quds also runs a large headline with the following quote by Abbas: "[There will be] no international veto of national reconciliation and dialogue will be launched soon. The U.S. is still committed to finding a solution before the end of 2008." In further reporting, Al-Quds writes that in a press conference held at the end of his visit to Tunisia, Abbas announced that he had met with the Tunisian President Zine Al-Abidine Ben Ali, and had discussed intra-Palestinian negotiations and national unity as well as Palestinian-Tunisian relations.

Coverage in all dailies continues to report on the fall-out of Olmert's announcement that he will resign once his Kadima party has elected a new leader in September, with particular focus on the competition between two possible Kadima successors, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Israeli Minister of Transportation Shaul Mofaz. The headline in Al-Quds reads, "Mofaz and Livni compete for Kadima's leadership and Netanyahu [of the Likud party] requests early parliamentary elections," while Al-Ayyam writes, "Israel enters a misty period with the beginning of the war to succeed Olmert," and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida announces, "the war to succeed Olmert is deepening and Netanyahu has called for early elections." In related coverage in all dailies, an Israeli official said on July 31 that Olmert will try to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians before the end of 2008. In other coverage in Al-Ayyam, Palestinian Minister of Foreign Affairs Riad Al-Malki is said to

have announced on July 31 in a press conference in Madrid that the Palestinian Authority "is not worried" about the resignation of Israeli Prime Minister Olmert.

Al-Quds and Al-Ayyam report on the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations held in Washington. Al-Quds reports that the Israelis and Palestinians will continue building on the Washington negotiations, and according to statements she made to the media on July 31, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni is reportedly hopeful that an agreement will be reached. An Al-Ayyam headline quotes Sa'eb Erekat, the Palestinian Chief Negotiator, as saying, "there will be no state and no reconciliation without Jerusalem, and we have given Washington and Israel a list of names of [Palestinian] prisoners to be released."

Al-Quds devotes part of its front page to reports about Israeli actions in the West Bank and Jerusalem, including a large story about the Al-Kurd family in Sheikh Jarrah (East Jerusalem), who was ordered to evacuate their home in an Israeli Supreme Court decision handed down on July 14. Al-Ayyam also reports on this story in an inside page. Both dailies report on the sit-ins that have taken place in solidarity with the family since the court decision was announced. The two dailies cite Demetri Deliani, a Jerusalem-based Fatah spokesperson, as having said on July 31 that Jewish-American money is the backbone of Israeli settlement activities in Jerusalem and that this money is taken from the U.S. economy to support Israeli actions in Jerusalem. The dailies also report that the political attach of the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem received on July 31 a Jerusalemite delegation including Deliani, Ahmad Ruweidi (who holds the Jerusalem file at the Palestinian Presidency), Hatem

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Abdul Qader (advisor to the Palestinian Prime Minister) and Fatah leader Kifah Radaydeh. The delegation reportedly briefed the U.S. official on the latest developments in Jerusalem and asked the U.S. to intervene in the matter in its role as sponsor of the peace process. The delegation is said to have given the U.S. official various documents, including papers proving that the Al-Kurds are the rightful owners of the house, and copies of the fake ownership documents supplied by the Israelis. In other coverage on Israeli actions in the West Bank, Al-Quds reports the arrest on July 31 of several Palestinian youth in the village of Anabta, near Tulkarem, and also in Ni'lin village near Ramallah. These arrests were carried out by Israeli soldiers.

The dailies highlight that all the Palestinian factions received on July 31 a letter from Egypt, inviting them to Cairo to start a Palestinian national dialogue. In an exclusive interview with Al-Quds on July 31, Hamas leader Mousa Abu Marzouq said that Hamas welcomes Egyptian efforts to unite the Palestinians. Al-Hayat Al-Jadida quotes another Hamas leader, Ismail Radwan, as saying in a press conference on July 31 in the Gaza Strip that "we [Hamas] will determine our attitude regarding the Egyptian invitation after we know its details."

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BLOCK QUOTES:  
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1. Independent Al-Quds runs its daily editorial by Rajeh Abu Asab entitled, "Making the national dialogue successful is in the Palestinian and Arab interest" (8/01): "Abbas has announced the launch of the Palestinian-Palestinian national dialogue following his meeting with President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo last Sunday [July 27] under Egyptian and Arab League sponsorship ... Following his national duty as the leader of the Palestinian people, Abbas seeks with all his power, and without respite, to draw a limit to the internal Palestinian struggle ... President Abbas has justified the Egyptian sponsorship of the Palestinian-Palestinian dialogue by saying, during his meetings with the editors-in-chief of several Egyptian newspapers, that Egypt is familiar with all the minute details regarding the internal Palestinian situation and has a wealth of experience in dealing with it. Egypt has also hosted many previous dialogues and this is what qualifies it to play such a role and [in the opinion of this columnist], Abbas is right in this

choice ... All Palestinian factions should respond to the call for dialogue issued by these two presidents, Abbas and Mubarak, and participate in the national dialogue and let it succeed ... [Abbas] cares about making this dialogue a success because it is in the interest of the Palestinian people. President Abbas has confirmed that he has placed no pre-conditions for this Palestinian-Palestinian dialogue and has stressed that the dialogue will be based on the Yemen initiative and on his own initiative, which he announced recently. He has also confirmed that there is no American veto of the dialogue because the dialogue is in the Palestinian national interest. We hope that all factions will respond to this generous call to start dialogue..."

12. Independent Al-Ayyam carries its daily editorial by a member of the Palestinian National Council, Azmi Al-Khawaja, entitled, "Going back to start a Palestinian national dialogue" (8/01): "In the past 100 years we have not witnessed a strong and painful Palestinian-Palestinian conflict similar to the one we are witnessing nowadays. The [internal] fight and the ongoing division negatively affect the Palestinian people, especially in the Gaza

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Strip, where Palestinians are suffering from the 'siege' imposed by Israel, and from the lack of international legislation ... We [Palestinians] cannot solve this [situation] unless we go back to the Palestinian national dialogue, and unless all parties and political powers participate in it, in addition to Arab powers who care about our national unity. The dialogue should be preceded by the following steps to guarantee its success:

- Hamas and Fatah should stop their negative media campaigns against each other;
- Hamas and Fatah should release all political prisoners and cease their mutual arrest and invasion campaigns;
- Hamas should vacate all the presidential sites and hand them over to Abu Mazen;
- Hamas and Fatah should sign an agreement outlawing the use of violence in dealing with internal conflicts.

So, the division should not continue, and we [Palestinians] should not solve our problems with violence because there will be no future for any Palestinian faction, regardless of how powerful it is, as long as this internal division exists. We should not give up and should continue calling for a Palestinian national dialogue because there is no other option."

WALLES